

SUMMARY OF THE 3RD Surface Passenger Advisory Council Meeting Louisiana Statewide Transportation Plan Update

Meeting Time and Location

The third meeting of the Surface Passenger Advisory Council was conducted for the *Louisiana Statewide Transportation Plan Update*. The Council met on October 22, 2002, at the Radisson Hotel in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Meeting Attendees

The following persons attended the meeting:

Advisory Council Members/Representatives

John Guignard, Guignard Biodynamics
Patrick Judge, Louisiana Public Transit Association
Karen Parson, New Orleans Regional Planning Commission

Non-Member DOTD Staff

Dan Broussard, LADOTD
Carol Cranshaw, DOTD Public Transportation
Eric Kalivoda, LADOTD
Tom Bartkiewicz, LADOTD
Emily C. Efferson, LADOTD

Consultant Team Members

Butch Babineaux, WSA
Jim Amdal, UNO/CUPA MPIC

Others

Pete Chochels, JEDCO
James Guilbeau, Sierra Club
Faye Feig, Great American Coach

Meeting Purpose

The purpose of the meeting was to present and refine the recommendations found in the draft report of the Statewide Surface Passenger Transportation Plan.

Summary of Meeting Comments

Jim Amdal made the presentation of the recommendations contained in the draft final report. Dr. Eric Kalivoda directed the subsequent discussion that clarified and added to the recommendations.

For background, Mr. Amdal presented demographics for Louisiana, especially for those considered to be transportation disadvantaged (age over 65, minority, disabled, no access to vehicle).

One of the benchmarks in the statewide economic development plan—Vison 2020—is to have some form of public transit in all 64 parishes (currently 29 parishes do not have any). Mr. Amdal presented the methodology developed by the Merritt C. Becker, Jr. Intermodal Transportation Policy and Implementation Center (ITPIC) to estimate the cost of achieving the Vision 2002 goal.

Most people in attendance seemed to agree the method was a reasonable approach to a complex issue. The final estimates depended on the percentage of state highway miles to be covered by transit. The yearly operating deficit for the 29 parishes range from \$17 million a year for coverage of 50% of the state's highways to \$34 million for coverage of 100% of the state's highway miles. Most people felt that these amounts were reasonable, especially giving the inherent ambiguities of the task. In addition, there was some discussion about how to prioritize areas for the establishment of transportation systems (i.e. by population density, demographics of the specific parishes, etc.)

The following are changes and additions to the specific recommendations in the report brought up during the meeting:

- The importance of a Surface Passenger Development fund was noted, especially as it is possible that Congress may increase states' share of long-distance passenger rail costs. Louisiana could use the funds for this purpose, should the state wish to maintain or enhance passenger rail service.
- The coordination of planning and utilization of federal funding sources for specialized transit would allow more effective utilization of the funds among the various agencies that provide transit (i.e. Councils on Aging).
- Promote public transportation service with centers of higher learning. Some universities throughout the nation have noted success with such programs. Tulane University is working with the Regional Transit Authority on such a program. It was suggested that it might be less successful at the University of New Orleans, given that much of this student population already commutes by car, and that there are few bus routes near the UNO campus.
- There is a need for the creation of an interstate bus task force and a statewide intercity bus needs assessment to determine the needs of communities not currently served by intercity bus routes. The estimated cost is about \$125,000 and it was indicated that federal funds are currently available for this project.

- A recommendation regarding bicycles and pedestrians, not in the original final draft, was added. This recommendation stressed the importance of incorporating bicycle and pedestrian planning at the earliest stages of highway and infrastructure projects, such as bridge replacement.
- The safety and security of transportation systems was also a recommendation added during the meeting. This recommendation not only includes safety and security in a post-911 sense, but also from a human factors perspective, such as accident prevention and mitigation.